

AG NEWS



Utah Department of
Agriculture and Food

MORMON CRICKET POPULATION IS DOWN FOR 2005

Effective spray programs and wet spring credited for change

Following seven years of historically high numbers of Mormon crickets, survey teams report a significant drop in population of the crop-eating pest. The Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) and the U.S.D.A., Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) credit an effective spray program and a cool, wet spring for the turnaround in cricket populations. Survey teams who recently completed their inspections of infested areas report seeing fewer than expected numbers.

"This is excellent news for our farmers and ranchers," said Utah Commissioner of Agriculture and Food, Leonard M. Blackham. "It looks like the combination of repeated ground and areal treatment programs and cold, wet weather in April and May did the trick," he added.

While numbers of the six-legged insects are down, Blackham cautions that farmers and ranchers in several areas can still expect to see large bands of crickets and grasshoppers this season.

The 2005 insect spray program is currently under way, with various areas of the state targeted for cricket and grasshopper spraying. A 35,000 acre area in Northwestern Box Elder County was treated by aircraft that were fitted with special global positioning satellite units to maximize their accuracy. Other large sections of land will also be treated in the coming weeks.

USDA-APHIS's State Plant Health Director, Robert King, says besides the effectiveness of the spray program, the cool weather and moisture during April and May led to the decay of a large percentage of the cricket's egg sacks that are buried in the ground. In essence millions of crickets never hatched this year he said.

Box Elder County cattle rancher, Darrell Nielsen, welcomes the program as a means to help protect his rangeland grasses that he uses to feed his cattle herd. "I think it's a very, very good program. We need it to help control the crickets," he added.

Utah's Mormon cricket population peaked last year at 2.8 million acres.

Population by year:

2003, 2.7 million acres;

2002, 2.4 million acres;

2001, 1.9 million acres;

2000, 660,000 acres;

1999, 760,000 acres;


1998, 500,000 acres



One airplane used recently to spray for Mormon crickets in the Grouse Creek area of Box Elder County. Special Global Positioning Satellite equipment was used to help keep the pilots on a precise course.



This road located in Western Box Elder County shows a small number of crickets on it. Previous years' effective spray programs and the cold wet spring are credited for reducing cricket populations in 2005



USDA PROVIDES \$104.5 MILLION FOR NATURAL DISASTER RECOVERY IN 15 STATES

Utah to receive \$62 million

WASHINGTON, June 8, 2005-Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns today announced \$104.5 million in Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) funding for locally-sponsored watershed protection projects resulting from floods and other natural disasters such as tornadoes, fires, drought and hurricanes.

"These funds were provided through a supplemental appropriation and will help restore critical watersheds while responding to the needs of rural communities," said Johanns.

States receiving the emergency funds are Alabama, Arizona, California, Florida, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Utah and Washington.

Through EWP, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and financial assistance to protect life and property threatened by excessive erosion and flooding caused by the sudden impairment of a watershed from a natural disaster.

EWP funds address public safety and restoration efforts on private lands and are used to remove debris, restore eroded streambanks, re-seed burned areas and take related steps to mitigate threats to people and property from impaired watersheds.

Following is a list of states and the total EWP funds they will receive. The balance of the supplemental funds, \$1,670,800, will be used as a contingency reserve.

State	Total EWP Funds
Alabama	\$3,175,200
Arizona	\$3,672,000
California	\$10,800,000
Florida	\$3,000,000
Hawaii	\$240,000
Massachusetts	\$1,485,600
Mississippi	\$344,400
New Mexico	\$2,400,000
New York	\$2,772,000
Ohio	\$102,000
Oklahoma	\$9,300,000
Pennsylvania	\$912,000
Tennessee	\$1,645,200
Utah	\$62,800,800
Washington	\$180,000
TOTAL	\$102,829,200

Additional information on EWP is on the Web at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp>.

Commission Blackham Kicks Off Agriculture Forums In Five Utah Counties

Daggett, Uintah and Duchesne Counties are first

Utah Commissioner of Agriculture and Food, Leonard Blackham kicked off a series of “Open Forums with the Commissioner” in Daggett, Uintah and Duchesne Counties on Tuesday, June 14 and Wednesday, June 15. The forums are the first of a number of visits he has planned throughout the state to hear directly from farmers and ranchers. The visits were open to anyone with an agricultural interest who wished to speak to the Utah Commissioner of Agriculture and Food.

“I think it is important that I hear directly from our farmers and ranchers,” said Commissioner Blackham. “I’m willing to talk to anyone about any ag. issue,” he added.

The first series of visits attracted several dozen farmers and ranchers who were concerned about the recent release of water from Flaming Gorge Reservoir by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. They expressed concern about soil erosion and the presence of standing water that could add to the West Nile virus mosquito populations. Other ranchers wanted to know the latest on BSE or mad cow testing and the status of beef imports from Canada along with soil conservation, watershed protection, and other issues.

The forums give Commissioner Blackham the chance to let producers know he is working to improve market prices for them as a way to add security to the agriculture industry in Utah. The Commissioner outlined a campaign aimed at promoting tourism in rural Utah that supports grazing on public lands. He said grazing and outdoor recreation can be compatible under the right circumstances.

The commissioner also visited Grand and San Juan Counties where he met with organic producers and other farmers and ranchers.

Commissioner Blackham has forums scheduled for later this year in: Cache and Rich Counties; Box Elder; Juab and Millard; Iron, Beaver, and Wasatch; Sanpete and Sevier; and Emery and Carbon.



(above) Commissioner Blackham visited with ranchers and farmers in Daggett, Uintah and Duchesne Counties as part of his “Open Forum with the Commissioner” series. He toured water conservation projects like this wheel-line irrigation system below in Daggett County.



Commissioner Blackham (left) visits organic wheat fields in San Juan County with farmer Bob Berry and (right) County Commissioner, Bruce Adams.





VESICULAR STOMATITIS (VS) CONFIRMED IN TWO UTAH HORSES

June 17, 2005 — Tests conducted by the National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) in Ames, Iowa, have confirmed the finding of vesicular stomatitis (VS) in two horses in Utah. One of the horses is located on a premise in Garfield County and the other horse is located in Davis county. VS is primarily a livestock disease that is not easily transmitted to humans. Both horses are alive and are expected to recover.

The confirmation of the disease has prompted a mandatory quarantine of the infected locations by Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) State Veterinarian, Dr. Mike Marshall.

In April and May of this year, horses in Texas, Arizona and New Mexico have also tested positive for vesicular stomatitis. VS is a viral disease that primarily affects cattle, horses, and swine.

This disease also occasionally affects sheep and goats. Humans can also become infected with vesicular stomatitis when handling affected animals.

It is essential that veterinarians and livestock owners be on the alert for animals displaying clinical signs characteristic of the disease such as lesions in the mouth and on the dental pad, tongue, lips, nostrils, hooves, and teats. These blisters leave raw tissue that is so painful that infected animals generally refuse to eat or drink and show signs of lameness. Severe weight loss usually follows, and in dairy cows, a severe drop in milk production commonly occurs.

While vesicular stomatitis can cause economic losses to livestock producers, it is a particularly

significant disease because its outward signs are similar to those of foot-and-mouth disease, a foreign

animal disease of cloven-hoofed animals that was eradicated from the United States in 1929.

Humans can contract vesicular stomatitis when handling affected animals if proper biosafety methods are not followed. Prevalence of this disease in humans may be underreported because it may often go undetected or be misdiagnosed. In people, vesicular stomatitis causes an acute influenza-like illness with symptoms such as fever, muscle aches, headache, and malaise.

There is no specific treatment or cure for vesicular stomatitis. Owners can protect their animals from this disease by avoiding congregation of animals in the vicinity where vesicular stomatitis has occurred. Good sanitation and quarantine practices on affected farms usually contain the infection until it dies out of its own accord. Owners are encouraged to control biting insects such as black flies and other flying and/or biting insects.

For additional information on vesicular stomatitis please refer to the following APHIS Web page:

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/ceah/ncahs/nsu/surveillance/vsv/vsv.htm>

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Agriculture Mediation Bill Signed into Law - Vital Program Continues

Utah farmers and ranches who rely on the Certified State Agriculture Mediation Program to help them through difficult economic times will have that valuable service extended now that President Bush has signed the Agriculture Mediation Bill. Legislation designed to continue funding the Ag. Mediation Program passed the U.S. House of Representatives recently and was signed into law by President Bush June 30.

"This is good news for Utah farmers and ranchers who find themselves in financial troubles or involved in adverse decisions regarding USDA programs and need this important service to remain viable," said Deputy Commissioner of Utah Department of Agriculture and Food, Kyle Stephens. The program helps farmers and ranchers seek confidential advice and counsel to address loan problems and disputes before they grow to be too much for the producer to handle. The legislation will continue to authorize funding of the Certified State Agriculture Mediation Program for five years.



Mediation provides a neutral, confidential forum to discuss complex issues and build strong working relationships with producers, their lenders and government agencies. The programs address issues in a confidential and non-adversarial setting outside the traditional legal process of foreclosure, bankruptcy, appeals and litigation. Utah farmers and ranchers can contact Deputy Commissioner Stephens to find out more about the program at: (801) 538-7103.

Since the program was reauthorized in 2000, seven more states have implemented a USDA Certified State Agricultural Mediation Program, bringing the total to 32 states, a growth of nearly 30 percent. The number of mediation clients nationwide has increased from approximately 3,300 in Fiscal Year 2001 to more than 4,600 in Fiscal Year 2004.



Utah Department of Agriculture and Food statement regarding BSE discovery

The Utah Department of Agriculture and Food is confident that the recent announcement of a case of BSE in the United States in no way impacts the safety of Utah's or our nation's food supply.

This particular animal was not allowed to enter the food supply, and this tells us that our safeguards are working.

These existing safeguards have proven extremely effective, and the American public should feel secure in knowing that there are significant protections in place to protect us against the spread of BSE.

To date our Utah veterinarians have tested more than 4,000 animals in our state, and nationwide there have been more than 388,000 animals tested. One positive case out of this number of tests indicates that the presence of the disease is extremely low.

Michael R. Marshall, UDAF State Veterinarian

For more information on BSE visit: <http://ag.utah.gov/animind/bse.html>

